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ABSTRACT

This report offers the results of an effort to trace a value profile of school superintendents, who are distinguished both by a high level of professional education and by a need to relate effectively with those who have a lower level of education. The intent was to examine the growing polarity between a highly educated liberal "intelligentsia" and a conservative working class "bourgeoisie," and to determine how superintendents integrate these essentially contradictory value clusters. The three groups surveyed were superintendents, respondents to the General Social Survey, and elementary and secondary educators. An overall assessment suggests that the country as a whole is basically conservative. Educators, who have at least a bachelor's degree, are noticably more liberal than the general population. Superintendents, who generally have at least a master's degree, are even more liberal. The four dimensions considered were sexuality, freedoms, finance, and defense. The greatest agreement was found in regard to the sexuality dimension. Superintendents are not consistently liberal in all dimensions of their values. They are most liberal with regard to minorities, feminism, foreign aid, and atheism, which may be attributed to higher educational attainments. (Author/JK)

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Liberalism among Superintendents: An Attitude Profile Drawn from Contemporary Social and Political Issues **

The genesis of this study sprang from an article by Everett Ladd, Jr. (1978a,b): "The New Lines Are Drawn: Class and Ideology in America." While the main thrust of the argument was a redefinition of the terms "conservative" and "liberal," Ladd built upon an original base, a proposition drawn from a secondary analysis of several national surveys. He wrote:

> The primary class conflict is no longer between the lower class and the middle class, but rather pits a lower-middle against an upper-middle class. More precisely, it finds an "embourgeoised" working class contending with an "intelligentsia." (p. 49)

He suggested that our huge and growing college-educated population is coming to share the intellectual values and traditions promulgated in the nexus of our three thousand colleges and universities, a strongly liberal position. In an equally important development, a large segment of the working class has become lower-middle class, with its propensity toward conservative values. In terms of a continuum or a dichotomy, there are profound differences in the kinds of attitudes which cluster around the tags "intelligentsia" and "bourgeoisie."

The important point is that our class structure may have undergone a quiet transformation, a change which involves new groupings of attitudes and values along shifting social-class lines. This researcher was immediately led to speculate upon the extent of this value change, the shape of the value change, and how it is reflected in pivotal groups, such as school superintendents, in the United States. Furthermore, if there is a fundamental value

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value change among individuals which has implications for the class structure, a logical followed in regard to the possibility of subtle misalignments between those institutional leaders and their client populations whose roles have been predicated upon assumptions inherent in a stable environment and in the tratitional formulation of social class, i.e., that of W. Lloyd Warner and his associates (1960).

The operationalization of these questions became an empirical analysis of the match in contemporary social and political attitudes and values between superintendents and their communities. Specifically, it explored the effect upon term-in-office of a possible gap between the personal values of highly educated superintendents, duly profiled, and the commonly-held conservative values of many of our smaller American communities. The research hypothesis predicted that an increase in congruence would associate positively with length of service.[1]

The study, instigated by Ladd's speculations, proceeded in two stages. The preliminary stage was an effort to trace the value profile of a subgroup which is distinguished both by lengthy professional education (cf. "intelligentsia") and by a need to relate directly and effectively with large groups of ordinary citizens (cf. "bourgeoisie"). How superintendents have integrated these essentially contradictory value clusters was a matter of simple curiosity. Questions drawn from General Social Survey data (NORC, 1972-1977)[2] and then factor-analyzed provided the means for delineating a liberal/conservative profile for superintendents as a group. This profile became comparable with a generalized outline of core American values derived from General Social Survey respondents.[3] It is the first stage of the research which will be reported here.

Table 1, at the end of the paper, presents the percentages of respondents giving the liberal answers among three groups--superintendents from the present survey, General Social Survey respondents (1972-1977), and a group of educators (elementary and secondary teachers) who were selected out of the General Social Surveys as a control group to illustrate the possible effect of continued education (liberalization). An overall assessment of the tabulations must be that the country as a whole is essentially conservative in regard to this attitude index, more conservative than various subpopulations within the culture. This conservatism is consonant with the American core culture which emphasizes emotional restraint, sexual constraint thrift, patriotism, hard work, and individual freedom.

Dichotomizing answers into liberal and conservative categories is useful for developing a profile intended to accentuate those particular distinctions. It does not, however, take into account the scale values on a given variable or the measure of dispersion associated with that variable. Table 2 tabulates data from a one-way, analysis of variance, using the same three groups. The table basically shows where statistically significant differences may be found among the three groups interactively. The group means specify the location and the extent of those differences. The asterisk identifies the mean corresponding to the most liberal answer; whether the mean is large or small depends upon the direction of the answer categories, the number of the answer categories, and the consistency with a liberal philosophy.[4] The superintendents are, of course, the group of primary interest.

The two statistical presentations essentially reinforce each other. The first provides the liberal/conservative configurations; the second, estimates of significance. Several preliminary conclusions may be drawn. For instance,

an overview of the educators--who, for the most part, have at least bachelor's degree--shows a noticeable liberalization in attitudes compared to the general American population. Whether education is a major causal factor cannot be determined. Yet, superintendents--who, for the most part, have at least master's degrees--gave responses which reveal even more intense liberalization on several issues.

All three groups, according to their means, balance on the conservative side of a philosophical continuum in the sexuality dimension. Although three of the five items do not attain statistical significance ($p < .01$) for that reason, there are some curious distinctions. Premarital sexuality is more acceptable among the three groups than the other forms of deviance. Extra-marital sexuality and abortion are strikingly less objectionable to superintendents than the other groups. Homosexuality is more tolerated among teachers.

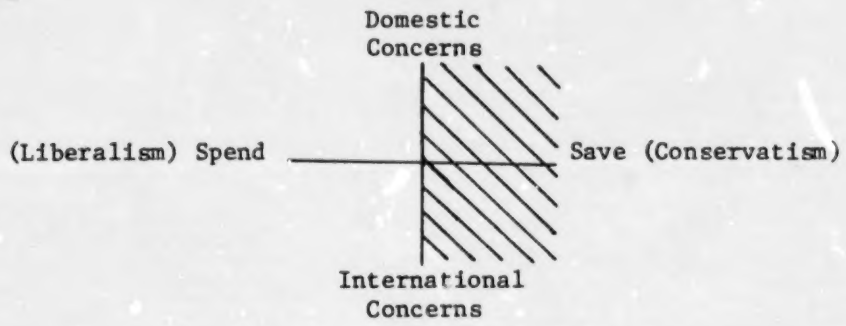
Speculation about these differences centers on the probability of a differential breakdown in sexual mores. As increased premarital sexual activity has become a public fact, so must its acceptability; each reinforces the other. The same may be said about pornography. Its effects are inuring. The superintendents' guarded approval of extra-marital sexual relations and abortion are compatible with a more liberal intellectual philosophy.

In general, all three groups are more similar in regard to the Sexuality dimension than any of the others. This is to be expected in terms of the American core cultural value of sexual constraint and of schools as the repositories of virtue. There is a detectible liberalism among the superintendents, however, and a distinction in that regard is worth suggesting. Their tolerance of abortion and extra-marital sexual activity may partially

emerge from an inherent respect for the individualism which is part of the American value system. Such decisions are personal decisions. In contrast, premarital sexual activity and pornography both impact directly upon the professional lives and responsibilities of superintendents. Conservatism must hold the line until new mores are firmly established. This ambivalence on the Sexuality dimension may be an example of the contrary sets of values under which chief executives attempt to function. (See Spindler, 1963, on traditional and emergent values.)

The Defense, Finance, and Freedoms constructs provide a challenge for interpretation. The indicators have all commonly been used in attitude surveys, and quite different frames of reference have been built in order to categorize them. For instance, one hypothesis holds that persons with negative attitudes toward domestic welfare spending will have a corresponding negative attitude on foreign policies which involve expenditures (Hyman, 1972, p. 181). A conceptual diagram follows:

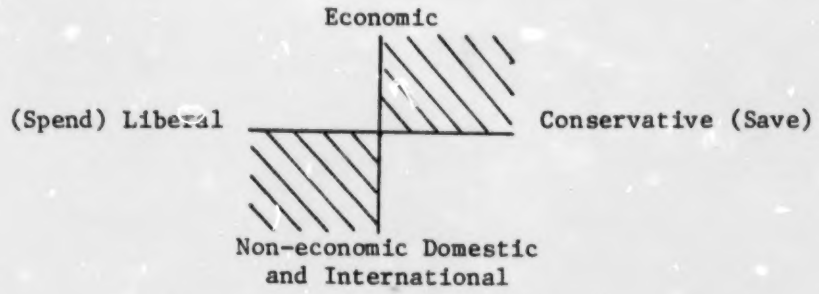
Diagram 1



Liberalism/conservatism is often epitomized by this spend/save function. While it is logical and useful, however, the model does not fit superintendents. Unwilling to increase expenditures in welfare, they do evidence some support for more foreign aid.

A second hypothesis maintains that liberalism/conservatism should each be construed in two dimensions--the economic, and the non-economic domestic and international (Hyman, 1972, p. 179). Persons and social groups liberal on one will usually be conservative on the other. This is the model:

Diagram 2



This model is better in terms of permitting variance among the clusters of attitudes, but there are still difficulties in the fit with the superintendents' profile. Support for military armaments and the space program belongs to a conservative political philosophy but not to a conservative economic program (in its most basic sense of decreased governmental spending). Open housing, which associates statistically with economic indicators in this research does not fit logically into the model, nor does expenditure for foreign aid.

The attitude profile of the superintendents really makes much more sense in terms of deviations from the American value system wrought by the effects of higher education and by the impact of occupational press. Superintendents are not liberals or conservatives in an entirely consistent manner which suffuses all dimensions of their lives.[5] They have a distinctive profile because they are superintendents, because they have lived and are living in the tension created by contrary sets of values and expectations. Intellectual liberalism is opposed by community expectations of supramundane virtue; lower-middle

class orientations have been displaced by upper-middle class aspirations.

The result is support for defense based on the valuing of patriotism and lack of support for welfare because it is contrary to the ideals of hard work and fiscal responsibility. In these respects they are true to the lower-middle class, bourgeoisie values of their origins. These particular values are also part of the older conservative business community.

Ambivalence in the Sexuality dimension points toward the truly liberal attitudes espoused by superintendents in regard to minorities, feminism, foreign aid, and atheism. I suggest that these attitudes are the result of higher educational attainments. The fact that this liberality is socially acceptable, indeed expected, among upper-middle class people obscures the fact that such answers are not acceptable in the other and larger half of the culture.

The validity of these conclusions is buttressed by the relative consistency in the clusters of these attitudes. That there is usually more integration of discrete attitudes, a tighter organization among the educated, has been documented (Newcomb, Turner, & Converse, 1965, pp. 516-517). Superintendents do exemplify this integration. I suggest that the parameters of the underlying dimensions which permit this integration have not been sufficiently explored and that the key may be in patterns of personal values which accrue to cultural subgroups, whether ethnic, social, or occupational, rather than in intellectual constructs of independent issues.

In an overall assessment, this profiling exercise lends credence to the idea that the individual's descrete attitudes cluster or hang together in more or less general patterns or systems (Hyman, 1972, p. 182). This is probably due more to consistency in personal values than an intellectual

integration of issues. This is not to say that such patterns do no change. It does say that the underlying value dimensions may be identifiable, in this case, the dimensions of Sexuality, Freedoms, Defense, and Finance. The implied value constructs give some internal coherance to attitudes appearing to be unrelated. These constructs may be described in terms of liberalism and conservatism.

Table 1

% of Varied Respondents Giving Liberal Answers

Dimensions	Variables	Supers'r.	Educ. Comm.	G.S.S.
SEXUALITY	1. ABNOMORE (favors legal abortion)	73%*	54%	45%
	2. HOMOSEX (homo. not always wrong)	27	39*	28
	3. PREMARSX (premar. sex not always wrong)	73*	69	67
	4. XMARSX (adultery not always wrong)	45*	30	29
	5. PORNLAW (few laws against porno.)	55	56	59*
FREEDOMS	6. FEHOME (women shouldn't stay in home)	94*	80	64
	7. SPKATH (permit athiest to speak)	78*	76	65
	8. COLATH (permit athiest to teach)	67*	56	42
	9. RACMAR (no laws against inter-marriage)	93*	84	65
FINANCE	10. RACOPEN (vote for open housing)	48*	44	35
	11. NATFARE (approval of welfare money)	5	16	19*
	12. NATAID (approval of foreign aid)	7*	3	4
DEFENSE	13. NATARMS (disapproval of military arms)	16	42*	32
	14. NATSPAC (disapproval of space program)	18	49	60*
	15. POLVIEWS (liberal)	19	34*	30
	N =	177	377	9120

* = the most liberal answer

G.S.S. = General Social Surveys

Table 2 Analysis of Variance for Attitude Variables

	Variables	Group $\bar{X}$'s: Super's	Educators	G.S.S.	Grand $\bar{X}$	SD	DF	SS	F	p<
Sexuality	1. ABNOMORE (abortion)	1.27*	1.46	1.54	1.53	.49	2	4.27	17.32	.0001
	2. HOMOSEX (homosexuality)	1.52	1.88*	1.62	1.63	1.10	2	2.00	7.02	.0010
	3. PREMARSX (premarital s.)	2.54	2.53	2.54*	2.54	1.24	2	.01	.01	.9880
	4. XMARSEX (adultery)	1.60*	1.47	1.47	1.47	.82	2	1.42	2.10	.1230
	5. PORNLAW (pornography)	1.61	1.67	1.68*	1.68	.63	2	.46	1.15	.3170
Freedoms	6. FEHOME (women at home)	1.95*	1.81	63	1.65	.47	2	10.87	47.87	.0001
	7. SPKATH (athiest spkg.)	1.22*	1.24	1.36	1.35	.47	2	7.49	16.49	.0001
	8. COLATH (atheist tchg.)	1.34*	1.44	1.59	1.58	.49	2	16.59	34.30	.0001
	9. RACMAR (miscegenation)	1.93*	1.83	1.64	1.65	.47	2	13.19	59.24	.0001
Finance	10. RACOPEN (open housing)	1.48*	1.45	1.35	1.36	.49	2	3.69	8.07	.0001
	11. NATFARE (welfare)	2.72	2.37	2.35*	2.36	.77	2	22.61	18.83	.0001
	12. NATAID (foreign aid)	2.61*	2.67	2.73	2.72	.53	2	3.15	5.55	.0040
Defense	13. NATARMS (military arms)	2.00	2.67*	2.12	2.11	.71	2	25.69	50.83	.0001
	14. NATSPAC (space program)	1.86	2.40	2.52*	2.50	.66	2	73.77	86.77	.0001
	N =	177	377	9120						

* = direction of the most liberal answer

Footnotes

[1]A random sample of 278 districts was drawn from the 1,583 districts which comprise the 3,000-5,000 enrollment stratum of public-school districts in the United States. Two factors influenced the selection of that range: the need for districts whose boundaries are coterminous with communities small enough to support homogeneity (in order that a fair estimate could be made of the inhabitants' attitudes and values), and the need for districts to contain 5-7 public elementary and secondary schools from whose principals informed opinions could be drawn (in order that the informants' technique from organizational theory might validly be utilized). Questionnaires were forwarded internally to principals from packets sent originally to individual superintendents.

[2]These surveys have been conducted annually (now to exclude 1979) by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago; the respondents number 1,613 (1972); 1,504 (1973); 1,484 (1974); 1,490 (1975); 1,499 (1976); 1,530 (1977); and 1,532 (1978). Each survey is an independently drawn sample of English-speaking persons 18 years of age or over, living in non-institutional arrangements within the continental United States. Block quota sampling was used in the 1972, 1973, and 1974 surveys and for half of the 1975 and 1976 surveys. Full probability sampling was employed on half of the 1975 and 1976 surveys and wholly in the 1977 and 1978 surveys. The cumulative data set merges all seven surveys into a single file with each year or survey acting as a subfile. This greatly simplifies the use of the General Social Surveys for both trend analysis and pooling (National Opinion Research Center, hereafter cited as NORC, Codebook--1978, p. 1).

[3]Gruen (1966) verified at least partially the existence of a core or a cultural configuration of values among Americans. A static conception of American values centers around the political ideals of patriotism, equality, and freedom, and around the social ideals engendered in the Protestant Ethic. The latter include the virtues of hard work and thrift, competition and ambition, emotional detachment, and sexual constraint. Within the contexts of the Colonial settling, the Western expansion, and the Industrial Revolution, such values were consonant with the robust strivings of many Americans. In contemporary America they provide for a coherent secular litany. (See Williams, 1960, 1979, for elaborations of the American value system.)

[4]A liberal political philosophy holds tenets such as a "spend" orientation, a proclivity for change, and support for positive or active government interventions. A liberal social philosophy is congruent with the "new" morality and the minority and women's movements.

[5]Comments about superintendents as a group from the political perspective are marked by the sheer lack of information. Only three studies are pertinent. Wilson (1979) labelled superintendents as "liberal conservatives," by which he meant that they are conservative on social, moral, and political issues but liberal in their educational philosophy (p. 12). He did speculate that they were perhaps more liberal on issues in all four categories than they were actually aware. Carlson (1972) suggested that superintendents were probably politically conservative (footnote 60, p. 97); and Gross, Mason, and McEachern (1958) found that only one attitudinal variable, political-economic conservatism, related significantly to consensus among school board members (and presumably to identification with a superintendent) (p. 186).

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